HARAMBEE FLAME

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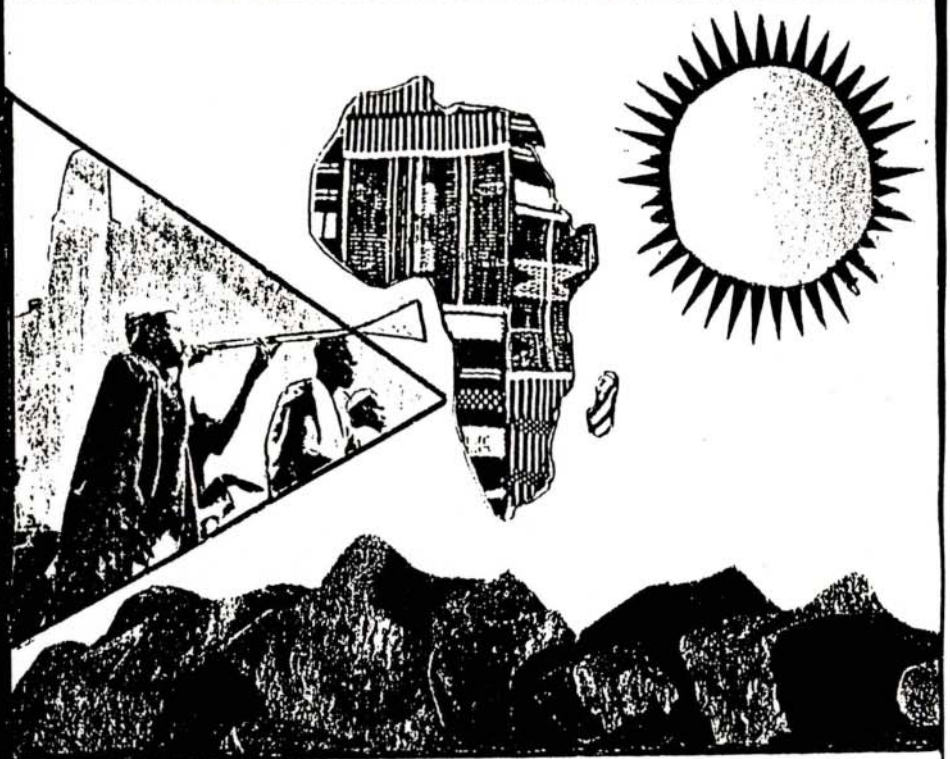

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HARAMBEE AFRIKAN CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

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HARAMBEE AFRIKAN CULTURAL ORGANIZATION CREED

Together we seek to know that which is us, to expand our collective consciousness of who we are and whence we come. We exalt in the fact that Afrikans are beautiful in our own right, rather than at the expense of any other ethnic group. And in the true spirit of the Swahili word, "harambee," we promote the idea that cultural awareness is germane to human growth.

COMMENTARY

There's a bunch of us riding in a van through a part of the city where the cops are notorious for pulling Africans over. Maybe one or more of us in the van have outstanding traffic warrants. Maybe one or more of us are holding spliffs. On the other hand, maybe all of us are clean but just don't want to be bothered with the hassle of being pulled over. It so happens this city has a noise-level ordinance that packs some pretty heavy fines. Next thing we know, the driver cranks up the volume on the stereo system. The windows are down. What do we do? We pull the driver's coat, let him know he's drawing heat.

Several of us are in a prison dayroom, some of us killing big six, some of us playing spades, whatever. In the midst of this, a joker pulls out a joint and starts to fire it up. Knowing that a guard could come into the dayroom at any time, probably on a hum-bug, smell the herb, and get all of us sent up front to piss in cups, one of us slides over to the dude preparing to get his head "right": "Yo, Bro. You're drawing heat."

It would be no surprise to hear the van driver reply, "I'm doing this" and for the joker in the prison dayroom to shoot back, "I'm doing my own time." Obviously, in either case, we've got a person who is doing what he wants to do. But if consequences come down, there's a good chance they'll come down on some or all of those around that person. This is why we pull folks' coats.

None of us would have trouble relating examples of individuals drawing heat. Where we would have trouble would be in running out of examples. But "heat" doesn't have to refer only to cops or prison guards or other enforcers of Caucasians' laws and the possibility or probability of a

bust going down. There is another kind of "heat," one that we don't talk about much, if at all.

Some of us who draw the most of either kind of heat are the same ones all the time jawing about how we've got to be respected, how we're not going to tolerate being dissed. And this other heat is tied firmly to the issue of respect. If Mugsy Bogues fires off a jumper right in front of an opposing player who stands well over six foot, it is probably because he's watched his game and learned to have little respect for it. His opponent has exhibited a weakness--no ups. So Mugsy burns him.

Living in the racist U.S., we have an opponent. And the team we're playing against is comprised of players, refs, the owner of the auditorium, and even the sports-casters in the booth. We're faced with the ultimate in home-court advantage. Our opposition has been checking out our game and has seen and continues to see weaknesses. As a result, this opposition has little respect for us and shows us none. Some of us recognize this. We try to pull each others' coats to the fact that some others of us are drawing the heat of our opposition's disrespect and inviting this opposing team not only to kick our butts up and down the court but to do so as if we weren't even worthy of their sweat.

Do we think Caucasians don't have sense enough to figure out that, as long as we are selling crack to each other, murdering each other over turf that's not ours, or robbing our elderly, they don't have to respect us and can approach and treat us pretty much any way they please? Why do we think it is that police can come into our neighborhoods; run "suspects" out of their houses naked and humiliate them on public streets or yank them out of cars and command them to lie down on the pavement and then put their boots on their heads, knees on their backs, and otherwise treat them as if they were stock animals?

Do we think Caucasians are so blind that they can't see that, when we call each other "niggers" and "bitches," get on television talk shows and tell our most private business before the eyes and ears of millions, continue to have faith in the Demopublican and Republicratic Parties, they don't have to respect us and can approach and treat us as they choose? Do we suppose it's merely some kind of happenstance that television sit-coms so commonly portray us as buffoons(with the obvious and willing cooperation of the African actors) and news programs and "reality t.v." generally present an image of us as crazed animals? These things occur because Caucasians have been checking out our game and learned not to respect it or us. Thus, they feel free to do us as they will.

When Caucasians see African women with straightened hair, blond hair, wearing make-up designed to lighten their skin; see African men who are obsessed with Caucasian women and chase around after them like hounds with tongues hanging; see African people who, when they first get enough cash to travel abroad, drool at the idea of getting their butts to London or Paris or some other European spot but have no thought whatsoever of visiting the land of their own ancestors, they know that there's a weakness in our game--namely, that a lot of us want to be more like them than we want to be ourselves.

During Kwanzaa, we focus on our history, on the traditions and values of our ancestors; we examine how well we have or haven't applied these values to our every-day lives. One of the things we can't lose sight of is that much of what we individually do can have conssequences for us as a group. In view of this, it isn't enough that we individually dedicate or rededicate ourselves to fundamental African values. We have to commit ourselves to pulling each others' coats. What the Isley Brothers sang several years ago may be even more true now than it was then: "The heat is on." Editor

Explanations about this edition

In this edition of the HARAMBEE FLAME, we have digressed from the usual "From Other Sources" format. Ordinarily we make use of this feature to present to you excerpts from news articles appearing in a variety of periodicals. Because Kwanzaa is a time for reflection and re-examination, this month's "From Other Sources" contains excerpts, not of news but of insights from a number of books, both fiction and non-fiction. It is our hope that you will find these selections thought-provoking. Also, you know or suspect whether you are reading enough. If you aren't doing enough reading of books that could be important to you, that could make you less vulnerable to politicians' cliches and media pseudo-facts, please read more. We hope these selections will motivate you to do so.

We wish also to take this opportunity to give some explanation about the HARAMBEE FLAME "Africentric Crossword Puzzle." Recently one of our subscribers referred to the puzzle as the "Africentric Cross-Up Puzzle" because, as she said, "it crosses you up." It is not intended to be a snap. While we expect that general knowledge about our past and current history should enable you to answer some of the questions, other questions are included which should cause you to have to go to your book shelves. We want the puzzle to be both "fun" and challenging.

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$7 per one year/12 editions

Harambee Afrikan Cultural Org.
P.O. Box 2500
Lincoln, NE 68542-2500

EDITORIAL POLICY

The HARAMBEE FLAME is the monthly newsletter of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization(Nebraska State Pen chapter). Ours is a pan-Africanist publi cation, meaning that we view all people of African descent as one African people, having certain basic interests in common. Also, the HARAMBEE FLAME attempts to be Africentric, in that, through study of the history, cultures, and traditional values of African people, we seek to have and cultivate an African way of looking at things.

The main purposes of the HARAMBEE FLAME are to stimulate and inform. We list "stimulate" first because, more than anything else, we want our readers to be moved to question their/your own ideas, lives and the circumstances in which we live and to challenge those things that must be challenged in order for us to move from a condition of mental and spiri tual servitude and physical dependence upon Caucasian institutions to a state of collective self-det ermination. Toward this purpose, we present commen taries, poems, etc. These do not necessarily repre sent the official positions of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization.

The HARAMBEE FLAME provides information because wise people want to know what's going on and because certain kinds of information can stimulate the mind, inspire people to want to act, and influence them to pursue proper understanding so that the actions they take will be as effective as possi ble. The main vehicle we use to provide information is our "From Other Sources" feature in which we make an effort to provide news about the problems we African people are confronted by and the steps we are taking to resolve them. In this feature, we try to provide coverage of the activities of African people and developments affecting us in the U.S., Africa, and elsewhere. "Community News" is another vehicle.

We encourage you to submit your reports, essays, poems, etc. Please enclose stamped return envelope

FROM OTHER SOURCES

Our Spirituality, Pagan Compared To What

"In Voodoo ceremonies, Libation marks the period when certain rituals begin and others end. For example, the Libation ritual during the ceremony that precedes the placing of sacrificial foods on the main altar - Bagi(Holy of Holies - before the prayer of sacrifice, also marks the entrance of the Papa loa(High priest). This custom is as common among the African-Haitians as it is among the Whydahs of West Africa. In Christian ceremonies, especially during Holy Communion, it is customary for the attendants(mass boys, priests, etc.) to set the altar with bread(host) in preparation of the recital of a 'pagan' ritual that demands: 'Take ye and eat this, Christ's body...', etc. For wine(alcohol) it is: 'Drink ye this, Christ's blood...' etc.

"The priest-or minister's first drink(libation) before he dips the host(Christ's body) into the wine(Christ's blood) and calls upon God(Christ's father) which is similar to invoking the spirit of the Yorubas of West Africa's God, Oledamare, and his Orishas(minor Gods). This is clearly stated in the ...'Take ye this My blood, and drink in My memory', etc., a typically 'paganistic' and 'cannibalistic' ceremony if performed by Africans or African-Americans in Voodoo. Is this ceremony not similar to the ancient custom when the Druids of Northern Europe allegedly '...drank their enemies' blood and ate their brains to capture their spiritual and physical strength'?

"Is there any major difference between the practice: When the Papa loa(High Priest - who is similar in rank to a Roman Catholic Bishop, Protestant Archbishop. Jewish Chief Rabbi, or Moslem Grand Imam) is aided by his subordinate Houngan(priest) and Mambo(priestess) at the

beginning of the eating of the manges(sacrificial food) as the badgian(acolyte, or assistant to the High Priest) shakes the asson(rattle made from a hollowed gourde with dried corn kernal inside) three times while the members of his congregation respond by bowing their heads; and when a Roman Catholic Bishop in his ceremony during the Holy Communion; or when a priest acts as the Bishop's acolyte and shakes the chimer(incense holder) and the chimes signal the congregation to bow their heads to prayer, while in the pursuing moments that follow the choir softly and solemly sings as his wine(libation) is carefully poured for him by his acolyte(badgian)?

"Is the burning of sweet incense in Voodoo ritual 'un-Godly but 'Godly' in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic ceremonies? If this is true, then 'Western Religions' incense is the right way; and maybe the choir in their religious ceremonies - with its organ and/or piano background music - is also the only one to be rated 'Godly'. If 'Western Religions' choirs are the only ones approved by the authorized Gods, it is only natural that the Voodoo choirs with their background ogun(triangular instruments beaten by sticks) and tambours(series of drums) - must be rendered 'un-Godly'. Why? Because a group of powerful men(European and European-Americans) who dominate and control religious propaganda ordained it so..."

-from pages 4-6 of AFRICAN ORIGINS OF THE MAJOR "WESTERN RELIGIONS" by Yosef ben-Jochannan

On Worshipping A God Who Looks Like Us

(Bishop Henry M. Turner responding to the OBSERVER newspaper's assertion that he was demented because he had suggested that "God is a Negro." The remarks below were delivered in VOICE OF MISSIONS on Feb. 1st., 1898.)

(Cont. on page 9)

From an ad in 12/1/94 OMAHA STAR

JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR

MUSIC BY
ANDREW LLOYD WEBBER
LYRICS BY
TIM RICE

STARRING FROM
THE ORIGINAL
MOTION PICTURE...

TED NEELEY
AS JESUS

CARL ANDERSON
AS JUDAS

SYREETA WRIGHT AS MARY MAGDALENE

ORPHEUM THEATRE • JANUARY 6-8
FRIDAY 8PM • SATURDAY 2 & 8PM • SUNDAY 2 & 7:30PM

"The Observer has our thanks for the compliment tendered in respect to our thinking faculties, notwithstanding our demented condition when we understand God to be a Negro. We have as much right biblically and otherwise to believe that God is a Negro, as you buckra or white people have to believe that God is a fine looking, symmetrical and ornamented white man. For the bulk of you and all the fool Negroes of the country believe that God is white-skinned, blue-eyed, straight-haired, projecting nosed, compressed lipped and finely robed white gentleman, sitting upon a throne somewhere in the heavens. Every race of people since time began who have attempted to describe their God by words, or by paintings, or by carvings, or by any other form or figure, have conveyed the idea that the God who made them and shaped their destinies was symbolized in themselves, and why should not the Negro believe that he resembles God as much so as other people? We do not believe that there is any hope for a race of people who do not believe they look like God.

"Demented though we be, whenever we reach the conclusion that God, or even that Jesus Christ, while in the flesh, was a white man, we shall hang our gospel trumpet upon the willow and cease to preach.

"We had rather be an athiest and believe in no God, or a pantheist and believe that all nature is God, than to believe in the personality of a God, and not to believe that he is a Negro...

"...as long as we remain among the whites, the Negro will believe that the devil is black and that he(the Negro) favors the devil, and that God is white and that he(the Negro) bears no resemblance to Him, and the effects of such a sentiment is contemptuous and degrading, and one-half of the Negro race will be trying to get white and the other half will spend their days in trying to be white men's scullions in

order to please the whites; and the time they should be giving to the study of such things as will dignify and make our race great will be devoted to studying about how unfortunate they are in not being white."

-from pages 154 and 155 of BLACK NATIONALISM IN AMERICA by Bracey, Meier, and Rudwick

Dancing The Master's Dance

"'It is sad, it hurts, at times I am angry, looking at the black zombies, black animated cartoons dancing the master's dance to the master's voice. That they will do to perfection. But when they are tired of that, or shall I say, when we are tired of that we turn to our people's culture and abuse it...just for fun, after a bottle of champagne. But I ask myself: what other fruit do I expect that what we sowed would produce? All the same I look back on the wasted chances, on the missed opportunities: on the hour, the day, the period, when, at the crossroads, we took the wrong turning.

Aaah, that was a time to remember, when the whole world, motivated by different reasons and expectations, waited, saying: they who showed Africa and the world the path of manliness and of black redemption, what are they going to do with the beast? They who washed the warriors' spears in the blood of the white profiteers, of all those who had enslaved them to the ministry of the molten beast of silver and gold, what dance are they now going to dance in the arena? We could have done anything, then, because our people were behind us. But we, the leaders, chose to flirt with the molten god, a 'blind, deaf monster who has plagued us for hundreds of years. We reasoned: what's wrong is the skin-colour of the people who ministered to this god: under our own care and tutelage we shall tame the monster-god and make it do our will. We

(Cont. on page 12)

KUUMBA

KNIVES IN SUMMER -Ella Robinson

They called it a new beginning,
The extended summer at the top.
The warships sail.
The port is guarded.

Most refuse to notice;
The icecaps begin to melt.
If we do not shoot,
If we do not vote,
When we do not burn,
If we do not scream,
In the morning, or, in the afternoon
They shall not hear our guts growl.

The swallow of delight and light
Is the bridge where summer is extended.
The balding spot and the leaves
That won't go, yellow or mean,
As they may be,
Is a reprieve of space,
A backdrop.

You are weakened.
I am strong, but know not of my strength.
Your weakness you do not know.
Your back is never vulnerable.
It is your being.

Your father tells you,
As my mother does,
"You can run but you can't hide,"
As you call him a liar.
Fast on our feet we are
Now dark of skin,
Runners, you are to a new Party.
We are breathless.

Ella Robinson, a mother and formerly of the English Dept. at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, is now at the Tuskegee Institute. Her poems have appeared in the FLAME frequently.

forgot that it has always been deaf and blind to human woes. So now we go on building the monster and it grows and waits for more, and now we are all slaves to it. At its shrine we kneel and pray and hope. Now see the outcome...dwellers in Blue Hills, those who have taken on themselves the priesthood of the ministry to the blind god...a thousand acres of land...a million acres in the two hands of a priest, while the congregation moans for an acre! and they are told: it is only a collection from your sweat...let us be honest slaves to the monster-god, let us gim him our souls...and the ten percent that goes with it...for his priests must eat too...and we shall take it to his vassal, the bank...meanwhile let's all pray and the god may notice our honesty and fervour, and we shall get a few crumbs. Meanwhile, the god grows big and fat and shines even brighter and whets the appetites of his priests, for the monster has, through the priesthood, decreed only one ethical code: Greed and accumulation."

from page 163 of PETALS OF BLOOD by Ngugi wa Thiong'o

From "Boys" To "Men"--Beyond The Mere Words

"Black males in particular, but also Black females, refer to the white male as 'The Man'. Once this term 'The Man' is thought or uttered, the brain computes that inasmuch as there are only five major categories of people('man', 'woman', 'boy', 'girl', and 'baby'), if the white male is 'The Man', meaning logically the only man', then any other male must be one of the four remaining categories--'boy', 'girl', 'woman' or 'baby'.

"Because the use of the word 'boy' in reference to Black males ceased it only meant that Black males could then refer to themselves as any one of the remaining three categories of people:

'baby', 'woman' or 'girl'...

"When the use of the word 'boy' was no longer the term of common reference for Black males by whites, Black males began referring to themselves as 'baby'...

"...at present, the term 'baby' is a fully accepted appelation for Black males in reference to one another, 'Hey baby, what's happening'? In addition to Black males frequently referring to one another as 'baby', many Black females often refer to their Black male peers and companions as 'baby'. While Black adult females refer to Black adult males as 'baby', Black adult males often refer to Black adult female peers and companions as 'momma', often expecting those 'mommas' to provide food, clothes and shelter for them. It is not uncommon to hear 'Hey momma, can I ride with you'? Further, Black adult males also refer to the place where they sleep as a 'crib'.

"Thus it is clear that the origin of this specific pattern of speech begins with the perhaps unconscious recognition that within the framework of the white supremacy power system and its reflecting culture, power rests only in the hands of whites, more specifically, in the hands of the white male. And relative to the white male, the Black male is a powerless 'baby'..."

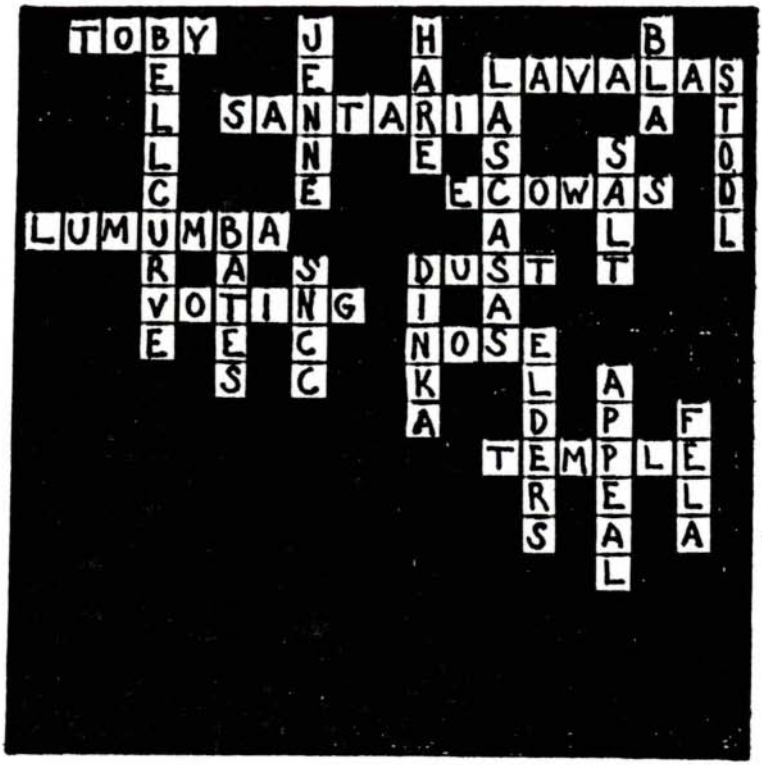
-from pages 120 and 121 of THE ISIS PAPERS by Frances Cress Welsing

Sonia Speaks To Martin

"The decade after your death docked like a spaceship on a new planet. Voyagers all we were. We were the aliens walking up the '70s, a holocaust people on the move looking out from dark eyes. A thirsty generation, circling the peaks of our country for more than a Pepsi taste. We were youngbloods, spinning hip syllables while saluting death in a country neutral with pain.

"And our children saw the mirage of plenty spilling from capitalistic sands. And they ran toward the desert.

Solution to Africentric Puzzle #3



And the gods of sand made them immune to words that strengthen the breast. And they became scavengers walking on the earth. And you can see them playing. Hide-and-go-seek robbers. Native sons. Running on their knees. Reinventing slavery on asphalt. Peeling their umbilical cords for a gold chain...And no cocks are crowing on those mean streets..

"Sitting on our past, we watch the new decade dawning. These are strange days, Martin, when the color of freedom becomes disco fever; when soap operas populate our Zulu braids; as the world turns to the conservative right and general hospitals are closing in Black neighborhoods and the young and the restless are drugged by early morning reefer butts. And houses tremble..."

-from pages 69 and 70 of HOMEGIRLS AND HANDGRENADES by Sonia Sanchez

BACK IN TIME

(Edward W.) Brooke rose to his base of political power by obscuring the fact--as much as possible-- of his race. This was rarely alluded to in his campaigns and his conduct in office. If anything, Brooke is more a symbolic achievement for institutions like TIME Magazine, which did editorial handsprings over Brooke's election, exulting in the fact that a negro other than Adam Clayton Powell had finally made national headlines. TIME, which had made an editorial crusade out of hating Powell, had planned to do a cover story on Powell the week of his return in January 1967, but Powell refused to talk with TIME reporters....

"Clearly, Brooke, as a negro politician, was the answer to the white man's prayers. Despite the fact that he was a political anomaly, almost a political freak, as it were, white America has never missed an opportunity to point to Brooke whenever a discussion of Powell or other less popular black politicians has surfaced. It was a new twist of the old argument that if all negroes looked, acted and had the same kind of job as Ralph Bunche, white people would not object to their moving into their neighborhood. If all black politicians could only be like Edward Brooke.

"The junior Senator from Massachusetts has maintained his tangential involvement with the black community by attending negro social affairs, occasionally making a tour of a negro poverty program and speaking before black fraternal and educational groups. He has carefully shied away from creating an identity as "the negro Senator" or the "civil rights voice of the Senate," and as has been true in many legislative instances around the country, there are several white Democrats who are more liberal and more committed to black equality than Brooke..."

Source: BLACK POLITICAL POWER IN AMERICA by Chuck Stone

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Pan Afrikan Publishers and Distributors has just released a major work entitled RETURN TO THE AFRICAN MOTHER PRINCIPLE OF MALE-FEMALE EQUALITY VOL. I. This is a multidimensional work that draws from the disciplines of ancient African history, African-American history, African philosophy, European philosophy, African and African-American family studies, African and African-American women's studies, Black political theory and African-American music. These books represent a model for the just person, just family, just community, just nation and just continent, based on the just societies of Africa.

Professor John Henrik Clarke says, "the significance of Professor T'Shaka's new work is that he examines neglected areas of African history and culture in order to make both a singular and a collective statement that offers some solutions for African problems. In examining the missing didmensions in African culture with emphasis on the complementary relationship between men and women, Professor T'Shaka is examining old cultural values with new methodology. He has done his homework."

For ordering information, write to Pan Afrikan Publishers and Distributors, attention A. T'Shaka, Vice President, 11015 Monan Street, Oakland, California, 94605. Or you can call (510) 569-5395.

Editor's note: Dr. Oba T'Shaka is also the author of THE ART OF LEADERSHIP(Volumes I and II) and THE POLITICAL LEGACY OF MALCOLM X. If these previous works are evidence of the value of this latest book, then it must certainly be worthwhile. Brother T'Shaka is a critical thinker, not someone who relies on others' cliches or assumptions. If you live in the Omaha-Lincoln area, we encourage you to contact the Aframerican Bookstore about this book. The telephone number is 455-9200.